



Gainesville Opportunity Center

GAZETTE

December 2025 Volume 7, Issue 11

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A Major Success



Our 5th Annual Fall Festival was a tremendous success, filling the Clubhouse with great music, food, and more guests than ever before.

We were deeply honored to be joined by our long-time champion Nancy Ryan, as well as representatives from the City and County Commissions, the Police Co-Responder Team, and advocates for the homeless. With over 21 community organizations tabling at the event, the message was clear: mental illness creates complex health and social challenges, and it is only by working together that we can help people lead meaningful lives.

We are proud to be the hub where these partners connect to support recovery through work and belonging. Thank you to everyone who helped us celebrate this milestone.





James Recognized by Gainesville Police Co-Responder Team



We're proud to share that GOC Member, James Huffman, was recognized by the Gainesville Police Department Co-Responder Team for his success. The Co-Responders, a partnership between GPD and Meridian Healthcare, support individuals whose mental health challenges may have led to interactions with law enforcement. When possible, they divert and connect people to treatment, stability, and long-term recovery through community resources like the GOC.

At GOC, James became part of a welcoming community that focuses on strengths. He has developed new skills, built friendships, and found purpose through shared work and structure.

The GOC, GPD, and the Co-Responder Team help people rebuild their lives with dignity and independence. Working together, we each can give the right support, opportunities, and belief in their potential.

We are grateful to the Gainesville Police Department Co-Responder Team for recognizing James' achievements and for the vital work they do every day to connect people to hope and community. His story is just one of many that show what can happen when we work together to lift people up rather than leave them behind.



Reclaiming My Life: Forever a GOC Member

By Ella Tabares, M.Ed. Academic Advisor,
Warrington College of Business, University
of Florida.

I remember the day that I called the Gainesville Opportunity Center vividly: I was on the computer, sitting in my mom's spare bedroom (I had to move back home due to my mental illness). I went onto National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). NAMI's local site and read the resources page when I came across the GOC. I liked the description and decided to call. Unlike many businesses and organizations these days, someone picked up the phone. That person was Brett Buell, who has now been with the GOC 11 years. His tone was warm and inviting and he immediately invited me to visit.

The GOC was there for me when I needed it most. Vulnerable after losing my job due to a reaction to my medication, and thankfully being able to rely on my mom and stepdad, the GOC provided for me a place where I could leave my room and re-integrate into society. I made fast friends and felt supported being around those who could relate to my life challenges. I also felt valued by being able to participate in activities that were coordinated by GOC staff and Members to help run the Clubhouse from answering phones to making coffee to greeting Members to preparing and making lunch.

I can confidently say that I would not be where I am today without making that fateful phone call. The GOC gave me the confidence booster I desperately needed at the time to join the workforce. A good problem I have is that due to having a wonderful career, I cannot visit the GOC as much as I'd like to. But I try to join activities when I can for example, they host monthly weekend socials and I was able to join them at the Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo.

I cannot imagine Gainesville without the GOC it is vital to improving the lives of so many local residents. Gainesville is a better place to live because of its existence. I am so very grateful and honored to be a lifelong member, and happy to contribute to society now, something I would not have been able to do without being a member.



Month in Pictures

We were thrilled to welcome WGFL's team to film a TV commercial featuring the GOC! Our Members and staff had a great time sharing what makes the GOC such a special place and community built on connection, purpose, and opportunity. Stay tuned to see our commercial on air soon!



We were deeply saddened by the loss of Michael Shea earlier this year. During his time at the GOC, Michael shared his creativity in graphic design and video production. We were honored to receive a visit and generous donation from Michael's aunt and uncle, Cindy and Brian Shea. We're grateful to have been part of Michael's journey.

GOC Members and staff joined National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Gainesville's Annual Walk to celebrate recovery, community, and partnership! We were proud to walk alongside friends from Meridian Healthcare, HCA North Florida Hospital, University of Florida Health Psychiatric Hospital, the VA, and the Co-Responder Team..



We were thrilled to welcome our friends from The Grand Ave Club in Milwaukee, WI to the GOC! Together, we exchanged ideas and inspiration on strengthening clubhouse communities and empowering Members.

Fall Festival



Jean Thomas and Gayle Childs



Ed Book, Franciso Gallopp, Brett Buell, and Andrea Wyatt



Steve Kattell, Kim Ball, Lorry Davis with Grace Healthcare and Margie Foster



Jodi Irving



The Meridian Team is one of our strongest community partners Terri Faul, and Alan Paulin



Steve and Jennifer Elder, Joel Andreasen along with Board Member Mike Conlon.



James with our Gainesville Police Department and Meridian Co Responders

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